



PRESS RELEASE

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MAN SENTENCED TO 15 YEARS FOR HIS INVOLVEMENT IN SMUGGLING 8,500 POUNDS OF MARIJUANA AND ASSAULT ON A FEDERAL OFFICER

TUCSON, ARIZONA –The United States Attorneys Office for the District of Arizona, announced that on March 25, 2004, Jose Gastelum-Molina, 01/12/77, of Sinoloa, Mexico, was sentenced to 15 years imprisonment, Juan Manuel Perez, 02/22/81, of Sells, Arizona, was sentenced to 10 years imprisonment, David Aguilar-Estrada, 12/29/78, of Sonora, Mexico, was sentenced to 10 years imprisonment, and Jesus Reyna-Heredia, 07/17/80, of Ajo, Arizona, was sentenced to 7 years of imprisonment, by United States District Judge John M. Roll, in Tucson, Arizona.

On April 3, 2002, the Native American Customs Patrol Officers (CPO) of U.S. Customs responded to the Juan Perez residence in Menagers Dam, Arizona on the Tohono O'odham Indian Nation, to investigate alleged drug trafficking activities. After agents contacted Juan Manuel Perez at the front door, several individuals fled from the residence on foot and in vehicles to avoid apprehension. Perez and Jesus Ismael Reyna-Heredia, also inside the residence, were immediately apprehended.

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Behind the residence, Jose Gastelum-Molina, tried to flee in a 2000 Ford Excursion. He struck CPO Curtis Heim with his vehicle. Officer Heim fired at the vehicle as it headed towards his partner, Officer Robert Antone, striking Jose Gastelum-Molina. The Excursion then crashed into a neighboring building and Gastelum-Molina was taken into custody. In his vehicle, agents found 2,165 pounds of marijuana, a 9 mm Ruger pistol with an obliterated serial number, and night vision goggles.

Another vehicle escaped and five other males fled into the desert. As agents secured the area, they found David Aguilar-Estrada hiding in a 2001 Ford Excursion that was parked inside a shed. The vehicle contained 2,217 pounds of marijuana, a loaded AK-type assault weapon, a loaded .380-caliber Bersa semi-automatic handgun, five propane tanks, a walkie-talkie, night vision goggles and body armor.

A total of 8,500 pounds of marijuana, 10 firearms, 10 pairs of night vision goggles, 2 bullet proof vests and many pairs of hand-held radios were found on the Perez property.

Jose Gastelum-Molina entered pleas of guilty on June 3, 2003 to Possession with Intent to Distribute, in violation of Title 21, United States Code, Section 841, Carrying a Weapon During a Drug Trafficking Crime, in violation of Title 18, United States Code, Section 924 (c)(1)(A)(i) and Assault on Federal Officer with a Deadly Weapon, in violation of Title 18, United States Code, Sections 111(a)(1), enhanced by 111(b) and 1114. Juan Perez and David Aguilar-Estrada entered pleas of guilty on February 10, 2004 to Possession with Intent to Distribute Marijuana in violation of Title 21, United States Code, Sections 841, and Carrying of Weapons During a Drug Trafficking Crime, in violation of Title 18, United States Code, Section 924(c)(1)(A)(i). Jesus Reyna-Heredia entered a plea of guilty on September 24, 2003 to Possession with Intent to Distribute Marijuana in violation of Title 21, United States Code, Section 841.

The investigation in this case was conducted by the Customs Patrol Officers who are Native American law enforcement officers affiliated with the United States Customs Office, now known as the Immigration and Customs Enforcement Office.

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The prosecution was handled by Serra M. Tsethlikai, Assistant United States Attorney, District of Arizona, Tucson, Arizona.

CASE NUMBER: CR-02-00639-TUC-JMR

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